DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 420 314 IR 057 059

AUTHOR	Myers, Marcia J.
TITLE	Images of Librarians in Science Fiction and Fantasy: Including an Annotated List.
PUB DATE	1998-06-00
NOTE	44p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Authors; *Characterization; *Fantasy; Fiction; Futures (of Society); Information Scientists; *Librarians; *Library Development; Library Services; Literature Reviews; Novels; *Science Fiction; Sex Differences; *Stereotypes

ABSTRACT

Library literature is replete with articles envisioning libraries in the year 2000 and beyond, yet the librarian is rarely discussed. There is recent evidence that the traditional stereotype image of the librarian is changing. The purpose of this study is to examine the image of librarians in science fiction and fantasy novels and video tapes. Sixty-seven authors were reviewed; 27, or 40%, of the works included a librarian character. Research questions were formed on the image of the librarian and its relationship to role category of the character (major, minor but memorable, or mentioned in passing), the gender of the character, the gender of the author, and the time of the publication/distribution. The image of librarians in science fiction was found to be positive (44%). A positive image was found in both major and minor but memorable works. Male characters predominated (44%). There was no clear pattern as to the image of the librarian as it relates to the gender of the author. There is apparently no trend toward works with more positive images as measured by the time of publication/distribution. Comparisons were made with findings on similar studies on the librarians' image in motion pictures, poetry, mysteries, and romance fiction. (Author/AEF)

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IMAGES OF LIBRARIANS IN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY: INCLUDING AN ANNOTATED LIST

BY

MARCIA J. MYERS

EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
RICHMOND, KENTUCKY

JUNE 1998

IR057059

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IMAGES OF LIBRARIANS IN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

ABSTRACT

Library literature is replete with articles envisioning libraries in the year 2000 and beyond, yet the librarian per se is rarely discussed. Will librarians of the future be viewed as heroes or will they be shy spinsters who array their hair in buns, walk on sensible shoes, and wear glasses? There is recent evidence that the traditional stereotype image of the librarian is changing.

The purpose of this study is to examine the image of librarians in science fiction and fantasy novels and videos. Sixty-seven authors were reviewed; twenty-seven, or 40%, of the works included a librarian character. Previous research and the authors' own curiosity led to the formation of research questions on the image of the librarian and its relationship to role category of the character (major, minor but memorable, or mentioned in passing), the gender of the character, the gender of the author, and the time of the publication/distribution.

The image of librarians in science fiction was found to be positive (44%). A positive image was found in both major and in minor but memorable works. Male characters predominated (44%). There was no clear pattern as to the image of the librarian as it relates to the gender of the author. There is apparently no trend toward works with more positive images as measured by the time of publication/distribution. Comparisons were made with findings on similar studies on the librarians' image in motion pictures, poetry, mysteries, and romance fiction. The findings of this study will be of interest to librarians, English teachers, guidance counselors, women's study faculty, and educators in general.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project could not have been completed without the help of friends and colleagues. I especially acknowledge the cooperation of numerous library staff who so willingly loaned books from their science fiction collections and without whom this study would not have been possible. Special appreciation is expressed for the Interlibrary Loan Unit (Pat New, Linda Witt, and Debra Iglesias) at Eastern Kentucky University who provided excellent support and always cheerfully borrowed just one more book!

Mark Evans, who knows good science fiction, provided continuous encouragement. Carol Jeanet Thomas, an excellent editor, had many helpful suggestions. I also acknowledge the assistance of Virginia Hansche and Sandy Doutaz in the Library Director's Office at Eastern. I undertook this project because of a keen interest in science fiction and fantasy writing shared with my sister, Madeline Dodd. Thanks for the inspiration!

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IMAGES OF LIBRARIANS IN SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY: INCLUDING AN ANNOTATED LIST

Introduction

Library literature is replete with articles envisioning libraries in the year 2000 and beyond, yet the librarian per se is rarely discussed. Will there be librarians in the future? If so, what will they be like? Will librarians be viewed as heroes who organize, preserve, disburse, and promote information to transmit culture and civilization (1)? Or, will librarians be shy spinsters who array their hair in buns, walk on sensible shoes, and wear glasses? Both male and female librarians, habitually "sshing" patrons, are frequently seen as introverted, passive, conservative, and lacking in self-confidence. In her definitive work on librarian status and stereotype in 1982, Pauline Wilson concluded that librarians tend to accept the negative stereotype and perpetuate it by writing about it (2). She hoped to convince us that the stereotype can be improved and that librarians are the ones to do the improvement. Mike Freeman notes there is more recent evidence that the traditional image and status of librarianship is changing (3). Can we predict what the librarians of the future will be like?

Wiseman has pointed out that science fiction writers have some accuracy with predictions, including Robert Heinlein who has a 73% success rate (4). She believes science fiction writers can help us in the task of deciding what to plan for, what to expect, and how to avoid futures we do not want. The study described here should help prepare the profession for the future and provide guidance for educators, recruiters, and practicing librarians by exploring how science fiction and fantasy writers view the image of librarians.

Literature Review

In 1975 Katherine M. Heylman identified twenty-five librarians in twenty-two juvenile books (5). Fiction and picture books were included; easy readers and nonfiction were excluded. She analyzed the books using a checklist of characteristics and found that the librarians portrayed present a very positive image (83%), are usually female, married or likely to become married, attractive, and have a positive attitude toward patrons. She observed that the large number of positive images may result from the fact that the writers of these books have had some very good experiences with librarians as they grew up. In fact, a number of children's authors have been librarians themselves.

In 1987, Griffen identified four types of library images in science fiction (6). While the author concentrated on libraries, she also observed something about librarians in the future. The four areas identified were: 1) the computerized library where the librarians are noticeable by their absence; 2) the rehumanized library where librarians are freed from paperwork by computers to take a more active role in the life of the community; 3) the post-cataclysmic library where civilization has to reinvent itself and the best librarianship may not be possible; and 4) the post-computer library where librarians must think more creatively about future information formats. Griffen urges us to research and think about books, users, libraries, and librarians to develop a better understanding of librarianship and to help us decide on the future we anticipate.

The Bibliographic Instruction Group examined the image of librarians in motion pictures in 1993 (7). The annotated list of films developed was divided into three categories -- major roles, minor but memorable roles, and images conveyed in passing.

The 126 films examined by the Bibliographic Instruction Group were rated by this author as to image. It was found that 72 or 57% portrayed images of librarians rather than just libraries. Table 1 outlines the distribution of the library images by the role categories -- major, minor but memorable, and mentioned in passing.

Table 1

Librarian Image in Motion Pictures

Image	Role			
	Major	Minor	In Passing	Totals
Positive	71%	29%	45%	44%
Negative	29	71	31	39
Neutral	0	0	24	17
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(N=7)	(N=14)	(N=51)	(N=72)

In passing scenes were the most common type of role for librarians. Movies where the librarian had a major role also appear to be more likely to convey a positive image of the librarian. Minor but memorable scenes of the librarian were more likely to show a negative image of librarians than major roles or views in passing This researcher's classification of a negative image in the films was primarily due to out-dated stereotypes. Overall 44% of the films had a positive image, 39% a negative image, and 17% a neutral image. These findings contrast with the prevailing impression that the media portrays primarily a negative image of librarians.

The Bibliographic Instruction Group noted that the science fiction/fantasy films offered the most positive images of all the films reviewed. They felt that in the science fiction films information equals power and the old fashioned roles of custodian and preserver are of great

importance. The science fiction view of future librarians observed indicated librarians in this genre might either thwart access to information or lead the way to true knowledge (8).

In 1994, Wiseman published her analysis of twenty-three novels in science fiction written for the young adult (9). The novels were grouped by setting into near future, far future and post-holocaust. She observes that the librarians range from very traditional staff to machines. When the science fiction authors do describe a library, it is almost always done from the viewpoint of the user. She concludes that science fiction writings are a source of inspiration that could expand our knowledge of the future.

Gunn, a science fiction writer, examined libraries in several classic works of science fiction in 1995 (10). While the books and other materials mentioned pertain primarily to computerized information retrieval, "metalibrarians" are discussed. Gunn indicates that future librarians might have more information and better ways of handling it. Or, the librarians might be computer programs themselves. In any case, he felt science fiction writers can help us imagine the future better.

A series of studies were done using stereotype trait checklists for Master's degrees at Kent State University, which were published by the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Document Reproduction Service. These researchers investigated the librarian's image in mystery novels, poetry, and romance novels.

In 1991, Barnhart analyzed twenty-four mystery novels portraying thirty-five librarians between 1980 and 1990 (11). She found that the librarians in these stories no longer had the negative stereotype image -- they were friendly, young, attractive, dressed nicely, and did not wear glasses. Of the librarians portrayed, 46% were male; however, several of these still

possessed stereotype effeminate traits. Eleven librarians, or 34%, had a major role; twenty-one, or 65%, had a minor role. Three librarians were also remembered retrospectively. It was noted that librarians with a small part more often had negative stereotype traits.

In 1995, Pultorak examined librarians in poetry from 1958 to 1993 (12). Thirty-two poems and thirty-six librarians were analyzed as to positive or negative image. The librarians were equally likely to be male or female, and the typical stereotype was not present. Sixty-one percent had a positive image. The majority of the poems (86%) did not give a good description of the librarian.

In 1996, Elliott studied twenty-eight librarians in twenty-five romance novels published between 1980 and 1995 (13). Ninety percent of the librarians had a major role; 10% had a minor role. In comparing her results with Barnhart's study, Elliott noted that romance novel librarians were more apt to be female (96%) than mystery novel librarians. Librarians in both genres were helpful, friendly, attractive professionals and have transcended the stereotype.

In 1994, Vesper wrote of the image of the librarian in murder mysteries in the twentieth century (14). She found a movement away from the typical stereotype and felt there was a definite transformation to information specialist.

Does the usual librarian stereotype prevail in science fiction and fantasy writing? While libraries in science fiction have been found to give the profession some helpful guidance, it appears that librarians in adult science fiction and fantasy have not been studied in-depth.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine the portrayal of librarians in adult science fiction and fantasy works. As a result of the findings from previous research and through the author's own curiosity, the following research questions were formulated for this study:

1) Is there a positive image of librarians in science fiction and fantasy?

2) Is the image related to the role category (major, minor but memorable, or mentioned in passing) of the character?

3) Is the image related to the gender of the librarian character?

4) Is the image of the character related to the gender of the author?

5) Is the image related to the time of publication/distribution of the story?

Science fiction and fantasy works that might contain information on librarians were identified by consulting research articles on science fiction/fantasy and librarianship; analyzing responses to a query on the Science Fiction and Fantasy Listserv with over 500 subscribers (15); gathering recommendations from friends (16); and through personal knowledge. Novels and videos by sixty-seven authors that might contain information on librarians in science fiction or fantasy were identified.; twenty-seven, or 40%, featured librarians. The other authors studied generally wrote information of interest to librarianship but did not mention librarians as such. When an author wrote more than one book that characterized librarians, only one title was selected for the list so that a wider variety of viewpoints could be included.

It is difficult to tell if a character has a Master's degree in library science. For this reason, the original writer's interpretation of the word "librarian" was considered whether the word was applied to a librarian, clerk, or a library page as this would have been the impression of the

reader/viewer. This requirement had the effect of eliminating several interesting works. In Ursula Le Guin's *Always Coming Home* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985) a wonderful description of a the Kesh culture's future library network is given; however, the libraries are only staffed by archivists. In *Earth Abides* by George Stewart (New York: Random House, 1949) books and libraries are very important to the hero, but no librarians appear perhaps because they did not survive the plague that destroyed much of the Earth's population. In Bruce Sterline's *Islands in the Net* (New York: Arbor, 1988) all information seems to be available through a network which combines television, telephone, telex, etc. in a global system. Data pirates are active, but librarians are not mentioned.

As part of this investigation an annotated list was developed that includes science fiction/fantasy books or videos that provide views of librarians in the future. Short stories and essays per se were excluded from this list of twenty-seven works. When more than one librarian is featured in a work, the most important character is the one selected for analysis. While the list may not be exhaustive, it should be representative. For each entry information is given on the gender of the librarian, the gender of the author, the date of publication/distribution of the story, a notation of the character's role (major, minor, or mentioned in passing), and an opinion on the overall image conveyed (positive, negative, or neutral).

To gain a positive rating the reader/viewer must receive an overall good positive impression. Since the librarian was not likely to be described in detail, a checklist of characteristics was not used. Besides, it would be rather difficult to rate the marital status, appearance, etc. of a machine or some of the alien species that might appear in science fiction. The following criteria served as a guide for a assigning a positive image:

1) The librarian must have relatively high status compared to other characters.

2) The librarian must exhibit a positive appearance rather than the many usual negative stereotypes such as hair in a bun, orthopedic shoes, etc.

3) The librarian should not display extreme antisocial behavior such as committing murderer.

4) The librarian must not display a negative professional attitude toward users.

A positive image is assigned if the librarian character generally meets the criteria. If the character fails to meet criteria 2, 3, or 4, the image will be rated negative. Neutral is the usual image for very short mention or brief character development.

Findings

Several observations may be made which may assist library educators and library management in planning for the future. These include the image of the librarians, the gender of the librarian characters, the gender of the author, and the time period of the work's publication/distribution. Each of the five research questions will be addressed in turn.

Image: The first research question asked if there is a positive image of librarians in science fiction and fantasy. The answer is "yes"; however, it is not a resounding "yes." Of the twenty-seven titles reviewed, twelve, or 44%, were rated as a positive image; ten, or 37%, were rated as a negative image, and five, or 19%, were rated as a neutral image. While each work contained both positive and negative images, the ratings assigned reflect the overall impression the readers/viewers would receive. The ten negative ratings were primarily due to the librarian committing murder (Brin, Dick), exhibiting some traditional stereotype behavior (Asimov,

McDevitt, Miller, Stephenson), giving poor service to a user (Gerrold, Heinlein), or being a wimpy, anti-hero (Parsons and Keaveny).

Despite these negative sketches the librarians were generally of high status compared to other characters as evidenced by Brin's librarians, who are the most important aliens on Earth. While creating only an in passing scene, McCaffrey places a general in charge of the library for the planet Pern. McCullen, who's Highliber engages in duels, leads a staff of hundreds with impressive ease. A favorite sketch appears in the movie *Soylent Green* where the librarian is called "your honor."

The titles reviewed also indicate that librarians in science fiction are very service-minded as evidenced by Sargent's metal box, which recommends books with a soft quiet voice, or Tiptree's non-human librarian that is so helpful in the University Library. Even Brin's villain librarians try to do their best for their users, libraries, and their species. Pratchett creates a very moving scene after a magical accident turns the librarian into an orangutan. Even though he is unable to talk, the orangutan provides excellent service to a patron seeking a book. The grateful patron rewards the librarian with a banana for his help.

In Pultorah's 1995 study of librarians in poetry 61% had a positive image. (17). The science fiction books in this study with only a 44% positive rating are considerably lower; however, the two studies had different methodologies.

The second research question asked if the image was related to the role category of the character. Table 2 provides the data to address this research question.

Table 2

Librarian Image in Science Fiction/Fantasy

Image	Role			
	Major	Minor	In Passing	Totals
Positive	60%	50%	14%	44%
Negative	40	40	29	37
Neutral	0	10	57	19
Totals	100% (N=10)	100% (N=10)	100% (N=7)	100% (N=27)

In general the positive and negative roles in the novels under review do not appear to be related to the importance of the role of the character except that in passing characters tended to be given a neutral rating. Both major and minor but memorable roles tended to be positive; in passing roles tended to be rated neutral primarily because of the all too brief appearance of the librarian. Table 2 can be compared with Table 1, which shows the results of a previous study of movies (18). The works reviewed in this study which had major scenes devoted to librarians seem to be slightly less positive (only 60% positive) than the movies reviewed (71% positive). In contrast, the novels with a minor but memorable scene appeared to be considerably more positive (50% positive) than the movies reviewed (29% positive). The one video tape included in this study (*Soylent Green)* created a positive image of the librarian in only a few frames. One could speculate that this is extremely difficult to do, and that is why Hollywood producers feature librarians asking people to be quiet or madly stamping books for check in or check out. In contrast, writers apparently find it easier to convey a positive image in a minor scene while still establishing their character as a librarian.

The works divided into major scenes (ten or 37%), minor but memorable (ten or 37%), and in passing (seven or 26%). These may be compared with the work of the Bibliographic

Instruction Group displayed in Table 1 as follows: major (seven or 10%), minor (fourteen or 19%), and mentioned in passing (fifty-one or 70%) (19). It appears that librarians in science fiction are given a more prominent role than librarians in the motion pictures

Barnhart's analysis of mystery novels indicated that of the librarians observed 34% had a major role and 65% a minor role (20). Elliott found 90% of the librarians in romance novels had a major role; only 10% had a minor role (21). Librarians in romance novels appear to be given the most prominent role. The librarians' role in mystery stories is not too dissimilar from the role of the librarian in science fiction.

Gender: The third research question asked if the image was related to the gender of the librarian character. Table 3 provides the data pertinent to this question.

Table 3

Librarian Image and Gender of the Character

Image	Gender			
	Male	Female	Unknown	Totals
Positive	33%	67%	33%	44%
Negative	50	22	33	37
Neutral	17	11	33	19
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(N=12)	(N=9)	(N=6)	(N=27)

The female characters appear to have been given a positive image about twice as often as the male characters. The male characters (twelve or 44%) outnumbered the female characters (nine or 33%) and the characters where gender was not able to be determined (six or 22%). Barnhart found that 46% of the librarians portrayed in mystery novels were male (22). In contrast, Elliott

found that 96% of the romance novel librarians were female (23). The findings of this study are similar to the findings of mystery story librarians as to gender of the librarian character.

The fourth research question asked if the image was related to the gender of the author. Table 4 shows that almost all the works were by male writers -- twenty-three of the twenty-seven works, or 85%. Only four works were by female authors -- three of these, or 75%, had a positive image. These positive works by female authors included McCaffrey's librarian who was also a general, Tiptree's service-minded amphibian librarian, and Edghill's sensible librarian whose adventures include working with an elf-lord to save Earth. Sargent's metal box librarian, who recommends books in a soft voice, was given a neutral rating. In the books identified for this study, no clear pattern as to the image of the librarian appears as it relates to the gender of the author.

Table 4

Librarian Image and Gender of the Author

Image	Gender		
	Male	Female	Totals
Positive	39%	75%	44%
Negative	44	0	37
Neutral	17	25	19
Totals	100%	100%	100%
	(N=23)	(N=4)	(N=27)

Time Period: The fifth and final research question asked if the image of the character was related to the time of publication\distribution of the story. As indicated in Table 5, the time period of the stories was divided into the decades before 1980, 1980 - 1989, and the time from

1990 to date. Many of the titles reviewed (about half) fell into the period 1989-1989. Before 1980, 57% of the seven works reviewed have a positive image; since 1990, 57% of the seven titles reviewed have a positive image. There does not appear to be a trend toward works with a more positive image of librarianship.

Table 5

Librarian Image and Date of Publication/Distribution

Image	Time Period			
	Before 1980	1980 -1989	1990-	Totals
Positive	57%	31%	57%	44%
Negative	43	30	43	37
Neutral	0	39	0	19
Totals	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(N=7)	(N=13)	(N=7)	(N=27)

Summary and Conclusions

Previous research and recommendations from listserv members yielded sixty-seven titles which might contain information on librarians in science fiction. Of these twenty-seven, or 40%, contained information on librarians. Since no time bounds or country of origin was set, it seems to this author that more titles should have been identified. Perhaps librarians are not as common in science fiction as they are in romance novels or mystery stories.

There is a positive image of librarians in science fiction and fantasy; however, positive images (44%) only just edged out the negative images (37%) with neutral images a distant third (19%). Despite the negative images the librarians were of high status where compared with other characters in the works under view. Both major roles and minor but memorable roles tended to be positive. We find that librarians in science fiction are given a more prominent role than

librarians in motion pictures in a previous study; are not too dissimilar from the role and gender of character of the librarians in studies mystery stories; convey a less positive image than librarians studied in poetry; and have less prominent roles than librarians identified in romance novels. There are no apparent trends as to the image as it relates to the gender of the author or as measured by the time of publication/distribution.

Scherdin relates an anecdote that illustrates a sign of positive change in the image of librarians (24). The April 1994 issue of *Glamour* contained a stimulating article on how technology was transforming librarianship. The American Library Associations' Office for Library Personnel Resources received over 3,000 requests for career information as a result of the interesting article. The telephone callers indicated that they now saw the career of librarianship in a new light. The profiles as conveyed in the majority of the science fiction and fantasy works reviewed here create a very positive image. This is an image to which we should aspire. We would do well to disseminate information on what science fiction writers think our future will hold to classrooms, to the media, and to our friends.

Suggestions for Further Research

Only twenty-seven science fiction and fantasy books containing an image of librarians were identified for this study. What factors account for the relatively low number of books found? Is the low number because the librarian in science fiction tends to disappear due to automation? Would an analysis which includes short stories and essays provide a different view of the librarian in science fiction?

Many of the books for this study were borrowed using interlibrary loan from public libraries. In one case, the only library in the country that held the title wanted was the Library of

Congress, where they were unable to find the book on the shelf! The wanted title was volume two in an excellent Australian trilogy which the author arranged to purchase for her personal collection and for the Eastern Kentucky University Library. Now, interlibrary loan users in the United States will be able to find at least one copy of Sean McMullen's *Mirrorsun Rising: Book Two of Greatwinter* (South Australia: Aphelion Publications, 1995). The major holdings of science fiction are generally located in research libraries and do not circulate (25). This could make studies dependent on reading a large number of varied books from different time periods difficult, if not impossible, in the foreseeable future. Some comparative studies of the holdings of science fiction classics in public versus academic libraries and their availability might be of interest.

While differences in methodologies make real comparisons impossible, the data collected in this study indicates there are unexplained differences in image, gender of the character, and role in the work among poetry, romantic novels, mysteries, and science fiction. Some investigation of difference in genres would give us more information about the views on librarianship today.

What else can we do to enhance our image? We agree with the suggestion for image improvement made by Romanko: "It's time for Clint Eastwood to star in a movie as the first Librarian of Congress (26)." Or, perhaps more modern librarians would say: librarianship needs Arnold Schwarzengger to star in the movie *Colin the Librarian!*

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14. Virginia Vesper, The Image of the Librarian in Murder Mysteries in the Twentieth Century (1994) ERIC ED385284.

15. See the list of contributors, p. 19; to subscribe by e-mail <listproc@loc.gov> to request SF-LIT.

16. A special thanks to Dr. Lisette Kautzmann a colleague w.) made several suggestions.

17. Pultorak, The Image of Librarians in Poetry

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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

The following individuals have contributed to this work through comments on the Science Fiction and Fantasy listserv.

Bob Armitage
Donna J. Bursey
Don D'Ammassa
Camille Bacon-Smith
Pere Camps
Stephen Clark
Betsy Cyson
Design
Neyir Cenk Gokce
Fernando Gouvea
Chris Hill
Edward James
Michael Marc Levy
Jenni M
Todd Mason
Ele Meum
Robert Micallef
Steve O'Keefe
Cynthia Orr
Bob Roehm
Andy Sawyer
Jill Schneider
Charles Simons
David Sisk
Colleen R.C. Stumbaugh
Matthew Williamson

ANNOTATED LIST

Asimov, Isaac. *The Second Foundation* (New York: Street and Smith, 1948). ***

This is volume three in the Foundation Trilogy which later became a far-future series. The male librarian, Homir Munn, one of five conspirators central to the plot, is a stutterer described as "lanky," "ill-at-ease," and "introverted." When he is asked to go on a fact finding mission off-planet, Munn replies, "I'm no man of action; no hero of any teleview. I'm a librarian." When he returns to reveal the results of his research, Munn no longer stutters and behaves so confidently that he is suspected by his co-conspirators. They subject Munn to a brain analysis that reveals someone has tampered with his mind. He is bound, gagged, and ceases to play a major role in the story. The stereotype behavior gives this librarian's image an overall rather negative rating. Asimov does convey that libraries and librarians are an important element in future society. The Foundation series won a Special Hugo Award for the all time best series in 1966.

Bear, Greg. *Eon* (New York: Bluejay Books Inc., 1985) *

The story begins in 2000 when a large hollow asteroid suddenly orbits the Earth. The asteroid, at one time inhabited, is now deserted. The asteroid city has a modern state-of-the-art

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library and library chromium teardrop terminals in the private quarters of the former inhabitants.. Toward the end of the story, the heroine is kidnaped and transported a million kilometers into the advanced society that built the asteroid. She is not permitted full access to their data but is offered the use of a pedagogy (librarian) to perform her searches as well as instruct her. The asteroid libraries, which contain shocking information for the researchers, are a key element in this impelling novel. The wonderful machine libraries certainly provide a positive view; however, the too brief reference to those who created these libraries result in an overall neutral image of the librarian. The story is continued in the sequel *Eternity,* which does not mention librarians.

Brin, David. *Sundiver* (New York: Bantam, 1980).***

This is the first book in what will eventually be a double trilogy. In 2246, Earth is unique in the galaxy by having uplifted itself and two clients -- chimpanzees and dolphins -- without guidance from a patron civilization. The director of the alien established Branch Library on Earth, Bubbaeub of the Phil species, is one of the most important aliens on Earth. His Assistant Librarian is Culla of the Pring species. The library operates on an exacting fee for service basis. Both male extraterrestrial librarians participate in an investigation of unknown life forms near the Sun. The characters and the relationships between various species are very well developed. The

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librarians project a mixed, negative image in the novel because both aliens turn out to be the villains!

Dick, Phillip K. *Counter-Clock World* (Boston: Gregg Press, c1967, 1979).***

An ironic, contemporary novel set in a world that began living backwards in 1986. The library featured in this story has the goal of expunging information rather than studying or preserving it. The vivid characters include Mavis McGuire, Chief librarian of the People's Topical Library, who has a staff of 100. Mrs. McGuire is viewed as "bitchy," "hostile," and "mean" by users and by subordinates as a superb administrator -- respected but also frightening. She turns out to be the villain with agents, including children who had grown young in the service of the Library, who commit murder on her behalf. Mrs. McGuire's and her daughter's manipulations eventually result in the evacuation of the Library just before its destruction with an atomic cannon by a hateful crowd. This complex resurrection novel features an anti-information library and a chief librarian with a very negative image.

Edghill, Rosemary. *The Empty Crown* (New York: Guild America Books, 1998).***

This trilogy, written by a librarian, includes three stories of the treasures from the land of Chandrakar -- *The Sword of Maiden's Tears, The Cup of Morning Shadows,* and *The Cloak of*

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Night and Daggers. Ruth, the thirty-year-old heroine, is a sensible library science student who encounters an injured elf-lord on the streets of New York. He is Rohannan Melior of the House of the Silver Silences in Chandrakar, and he must find the sword the muggers stole from him or the human race on Earth's World of Iron will be doomed. Ruth, who does become a librarian, and Melior solve this and other problems with the clever help of librarian friends. Their colorfully written adventures occur on Earth and continue through a library gateway in Chandrakar. The author conveys a positive image of librarians. The characters only briefly spend their time at their library profession but they are frequently found being very heroic.

Forward, Robert L. *Dragon's Egg* (New York: Ballantine, 1980).*

This tale covers eons from 500,000 B.C. to 2050 A.D. following the development, discovery, communication with, and education of and from the fascinating chella who reside on a neutron star called Dragon's Egg. The species from a neutron based world have difficulty communicating with humans from an electron based world because the chella live 100 years to each human hour. The chella library contains taste-plates which the amoeba-like species reads by pressing their tread pores on the "page." When faced with a noise problem, the chief librarian, who is a member of the Council, admonishes the patron to be quiet. The librarian relents when he learns the patron noise was caused when he realized that the formation of

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Dragon's Egg caused the genesis of homo sapiens. This hard-science fiction story beautifully develops a whole civilization. The librarian's brief appearance results in a flat, neutral image. A sequel was published in 1985 called *Starquake*.

Gerrold, David. *Chess With a Dragon* (New York: Walker, 1987).*

Gerrold is the pseudonym of Jerrold David Friedman, the author of the Star Trek classic "The Trouble with Tribbles." In this book Earth humans have inadvertently fallen into deep intergalactic debt by downloading expensive information from the InterChange. Some critics blame the librarians, referred to as hackers, for this information disaster. The InterChange is described as a librarian's nightmare as it stores the complete records of over 6,000 species, some with over a half-million years of data. The library is so vast that no one can catalog it or download the full computer index. The humans eventually find a clever solution to their dilemma with the help of the Rh/attes, an unattractive species of "spies" or "snitches" who provide excellent information retrieval services for a price. The human librarians, who are not fully described, present a somewhat incompetent, negative image.

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer* (New York: Ace, 1984).*

Cyberpunk is introduced to science fiction with a protagonist who protects his

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consciousness in and out of the information computer network. There is a break in at the Sensel/Net research library where a construct has to be physically retrieved. A white-faced librarian is found cowering between two lockers. Her cheeks are wet and her eyes blank in terror in reaction to the hoaxed threat used for the break in. The female librarian appears very briefly and leaves only a neutral image. This novel won the Hugo Award and the Nebula Award in 1984.

Heinlein, Robert A. *Friday* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982). **

Friday, an artificial superwoman, works as a secret courier. As part of her advanced training, Friday is told to report to the head librarian. The keys on the library console give her access to the local library and major libraries such as Harvard and the British Museum without going through a human or a network link. The bound paper books could be read directly on the terminal screen if desired. Her research leads to information on Black Death that is important in the plot. She learns her way around the system mostly on her own as the male librarian is too busy to be bothered showing her the terminal or in answering her questions. However, eventually he did tell her she could get the same library information on the terminal in her room! This action story provides a brief but memorable view of the future where the librarian has a negative service attitude.

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Herbert, Frank. *Direct Descent* (New York: Ace Books, 1980) .***

The Galactic Library occupies almost the entire subsurface of the planet Terra in the 81st century. The Library, the repository for all reported doings of every government in the history of the galaxy, has a staff of 8,000 aided by robots. On-site researchers retrieve images of pages of materials in the collection on television like screens. The male library directors and their staff cleverly face the dilemma of how to preserve the library while still adhering to the Library Code which is to obey all direct orders of the government in power. In the two cases presented in this book, the government in power is trying to destroy the library! The author of Dune has created a very positive image of a future paper-based library and the spirited librarians.

Keller, David H. *The Eternal Conflict* (Philadelphia: Prime Press, 1949).***

A psychiatrist and physician writes of the conflict between the sexes. The main character is a Woman, who is immortal, intelligent and powerful. In seeking satisfaction, she creates a castle and brings to it through the ages an elderly librarian and an elderly mathematician. With the Woman's help, the librarian creates his dream million volume library complete with card file. When he is not playing checkers with the mathematician, the librarian tries to help the Woman find satisfaction. The librarian, featured throughout the novel, serves as a father figure who projects a positive service-minded image of librarianship.

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Laidlaw, Marc. *The Third Force: A Novel of Gadget* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).***

The heroine is a member of the resistance and the chief librarian at the Imperial Library; however, even that position does not give her the liberty of pursuing every document in the collections in this totalitarian society. A thumb print identification is required for the retrieval of information. All searches are automatically recorded and reported to the Department of Records Analysis. The identification codes on each book are subject to change, and the books are constantly rearranged by the automatic retrieval system so that book locations cannot be memorized. Before the end of the book the heroine leaves her library post because she sees the library is a "crypt for knowledge now. No one can borrow a book without fearing for their lives." This novel based on a computer game (Gadget) presents a positive image of a concerned librarian and a dramatic view of the uselessness of repositories of knowledge in this potential future.

MacDonald, George. *Lilith* (London: Chatto and Winders, 1875)**

A large library occupies most of the ground floor rooms in the hero's house. Mr. Raven, the long time librarian, appears at irregular intervals in the library. One day the hero follows Mr. Raven into a mirror-world where he turns into a bird but continues to give advice and counsel. During the hero's journey in the mirror-world, the wicked Lilith appears, as do

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Adam (also known as Mr. Raven), Mr. Raven's wife Eve, and a mother figure called Mara. This Victorian dream novel is complex and at times confusing. It well portrays a large ancient private library and its positivly imaged, knowledgeable librarian (Mr. Raven, Adam) who dates back to the beginning of man.

McCaffrey, Anne *Dragonsdawn* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1988).*

In the far future, six thousand colonists travel in three spaceships for fifteen years to their new home on Pern. The colony's official historian and female librarian (General Cherry Duff) insists that records of all ethnic cultures be taken to Pern because it is impossible to know when information will become valuable. She notes that the information "takes up no space at all on the chips we've got." Active volcanoes force the colonists to evacuate their landing site which is buried in volcanic dust. The building with the interface to the ship is given a heat proof seal. When the buried building is excavated, the computer (AIVS - Artificial Intelligence Voice Address System) is rediscovered in the novel *The Renegades of Pern* and extensively used in the novel *All the Weyrs of Pern*. The author mentions the library and the librarian in passing but projects a positive image with a high status librarian who establishes an excellent knowledge base for the Pern colonists.

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McDevitt, Jack. *Eternity Road* (New York: HarperPrism, 1997). *

This novel takes place in North America after a mysterious plague has destroyed the world. Books are rare as only six known books survived the plague disaster. The heroine inherits a book by Mark Twain from the leader of the first expedition to legendary Haven on which her brother died. She gives the book to the public library and decides to seek Haven. A scene near the novel's end vividly illustrates the importance of Haven's library where the books are carefully placed in drawers in cabinets. These rediscovered books help stimulate the regrowth of civilization. This fast-paced adventure story dramatizes the importance of books, libraries, and knowledge. The profession is given a negative image when the author mentions in passing that the librarian's role is copying books.

McMullen, Sean. *Voices in the Light: Book One of Greatwinter* (North Adelaide, South Australia: Aphelion Publications, 1994).***

This is the first book in what is to become a trilogy. In the 39th century in Australia, the head librarian, called the Highliber, controls a network of libraries and librarians scattered over dozens of nations. She is a very strong leader who kills people in duels over her library modernizations. A library reorganization, the first in 505 years, is undertaken for the purpose of establishing a new Calculor service which performs computer type functions using abacuses and

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hundreds of human components as there is no electricity. In addition to operating the Calculor, librarians have Beamflash communication towers to run, classes to teach, books to distribute and collect, and ceremonies to perform. The author, who is obviously familiar with both the public and technical services aspects of librarianship, has created an exciting, positive vision where libraries are still important and the librarians lead the advance of civilization.

Miller, Walter M., Jr. *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1959).**

The story takes place over several centuries beginning in Earth's 32nd century after a nuclear war. Only a few kegs of original books and a few hand-copied texts, re-written from memory, survived. The monks replicate medieval practices in their labor to preserve scientific knowledge, which include copying, illuminating, and protecting their collections. The rare volumes in the collection are chained to prevent removal. When the monks reinvent electric lights, they completely disrupt the library, and the monk librarian asks when they would be putting in a mechanical librarian. With another nuclear war looming, selected priests and their collections escape in a starship to Alpha Centauri. This is a brilliant far future novel that stresses the importance of preserving knowledge. If the monks are considered "librarians," then a positive image is conveyed; the one monk/librarian who is specifically identified conveys a more fussy, negative image. This novel won the Hugo Award in 1961. A follow-up story has been

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recently issued entitled *Saint Leibowitz and the Wild Horse Woman* (New York: Bantam, November 1997).

Parsons, Rich and Keaveny, Tony. *Colin the Librarian* (Great Britain: Michael O'Mara Books Limited, 1993).***

Colin was promoted from Assistant Helper to the Librarian's Assistant at the Clacton Central Library three years after leaving school. He is just 21 years old, five foot two inches tall, has black hair speckled with dandruff, and doesn't shave yet. The focal point of his life is the Saturday evening role playing meeting of the Friends of the Conqueror Society. Colin is visited in the library by Karp the Conqueror, who involves him in adventures on planet Threa. Colin has extensive knowledge of the Chronicles of Threa, which is helpful throughout his adventures. Eventually, he is co-author of the fourth volume of the Chronicles, which when successfully completed becomes his passage back to the Library's circulation desk. Colin is portrayed negatively as the wimpy hero in this British parody of Conan the Barbarian.

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Pratchett, Terry. *The Light Fantastic* (Buchinghamshire: Colin Smythe, 1986).**

This Discworld novel vividly describes the magical accident that turns the head librarian at Unseen University into an orangutan. In his changed form, the librarian continues to perform his duties, which isn't easy in a magical library where the stacks flash with magic and emit blue smells. Strange creatures are attracted by the magical leakage among the books. In one delightful scene, the librarian, who is unable to speak, holds the hand of a patron as they go to the stacks to locate a book. Being an orangutan makes it easy for the librarian to climb to the top of bookshelves to retrieve the book, and the patron rewards him for good service with a banana. This fantasy gives us a humorous perspective in an alternate future. The non-human librarian has a positive image.

Sargent, Pamela. *Earthseed* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983).*

In the far future, an automated Earth spaceship raises children to be placed on uninhabited, Earth-like planet. The ship operates a well appointed physical library that contains microcircuits holding millions of books. The library also contains a cube that displays holograms from Earth. Once the children are settled on the planet, the ship leaves but tells the colonists it has left them a library to help them build a civilization. The colony library has microfiche tapes, readers, and a librarian -- a small metal box that recommends books in a soft

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voice. The main characters, one of whom seems to live in the library, struggle with their inner doubts and the other colonizers in this book for young adults. The library and the "librarian" ship convey a positive image; however, the metal box librarian left for the colonists creates only a neutral image.

Soylent Green. MGM/UA Home Video, 1973, rated PG, run time approximately 1 hour and 37 minutes.**

In this ecological thought provoking film set in 2022 in New York, population 40 million. Charlton Heston stars as a detective investigating the murder of a member of the Soylent Board. There is a memorable scene in the library (Exchange) which seems to be the major source for information in New York. The obviously respected female librarian of the Exchange is called "your honor." The librarian is very service minded, and the information she gives provokes a major turning point in the plot. Stanley R. Greenberg wrote the screenplay or the movie which is loosely based on the book *Make Room! Make Room!* by Harry Harrison (Boston: Gregg Press, c1966). This movie gives a very positive, impressive view of modern information service where the librarians seem to have a great deal of power.

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Stephenson, Neal. *Snow Crash* (New York: Bantam, 1992).**

This cyberpunk novel takes place in the near future mostly in Los Angeles and the Metaverse, a computer generated universe. Scenes and characters are described in an innovative, vivid manner. The hero, Hiro Protagonist, a freelance stringer for the Central Intelligence Corporation (CIC) uploads information to the Library of Congress which has merged with CIC. When clients find a use for something in the Library, the freelance provider gets compensation. Some 99% of the information in the Library does not get used; so our hero also works as a Mafia pizza deliver; man. The librarian, a CIC software program, appears as a fiftyish silver-haired, bearded man with half glasses. At one point, the hero tells the librarian to stop walking so softly on his crept soled shoes. While his very encyclopedic contributions seem to further the plot by assisting the hero in solving the mystery of the metavirus called snow crash, the usual stereotype creates a negative image for the librarian. This fast-paced book was on the recommended reading list at the University of Kentucky School of Library and Information Science in Summer 1997.

Tiptree, James, Jr. *The Starry Rift* (New York: A Tom Doherty Associates Book, 1986) .**

Tiptree is the pseudonym of Alice Sheldon. This book contains three far future novellas about the area of space known at the Rift; each part of the book is introduced by the Chief

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Assistant Librarian, who is an amphibian. The librarian enthusiastically locates the information to help two young Comenors in their research in the great central library of Deneb University. The aliens appreciate the advice and the materials as each new text is carefully placed in rain proof wrappers. In the end, the aliens want to dedicate their paper to the male librarian for his special enlightenment in giving them help instead of telling them to look things up themselves. Tiptree creates a favorable, positive image of librarians.

van Vogt, A. E. *The World of Null-A* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1948; Columbus, Ohio, Ariel Press, 1970).**

The first in what became a series of novels, this story of non-Aristotelianism takes place on Earth and Venus in 2560. In order to find his true identify, the hero, Gossayn, must learn to understand and use his full mind power. Near the end of the book, the hero requests a visual connection to the nearest phonolibrary. The robot librarian in charge arranges to display and discuss pertinent information on how Gossayn can train his extra brain. The hero finds the information he needs in the details provided by the librarian and goes on to master his superhuman mental powers. In its short appearance the machine librarian, an expert in information storage and retrieval, meets three of the four criteria to create a positive image.

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Vinge, Vernor. *A Fire Upon the Deep* (New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1992)***

A human research team uses an old library to create a network and releases an evil power that can destroy the galaxy. After study to become a librarian at the University of Sjandra, Ravna wins a three year workstudy 20,000 light years away at the Relay archive, the network/archives hub of a million worlds. As the only human on Relay, Ravna is given responsibility for orienting Phan Nuwen, a reconstructed man. They undertake a mission to destroy the galaxy's evil power which leads them to encounter several species including the vividly described Tines -- dog like aliens who function best when bonded together into packs. The very competent librarian plays a key role in this vast galactic adventure which emphasizes alien and human interaction on several levels. A very positive image of the female librarian's technical and human skills is created.

Wolfe, Gene. *The Shadow of the Torturer* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980).**

In this future, civilization is declining and the society operates on the guild system. The main character is a member of the torturer's guild. On behalf of one of his victims the torturer visits the Library, where we briefly meet the male librarian. The early part of the story has some well-done scenes of the book-based library and its procedures, including a wonderful account of the recruitment of children at a very early age to become librarians. This novel, volume one of

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the four volume Book of the New Sun, won the British Science Fiction Association Award in 1981. The library and the librarian only appear briefly, casting a neutral, somewhat traditional image.

Zahn, Timothy. *A Coming of Age* (New York: Bluejay, 1984).**

The teenage heroine wants to learn to read even though reading is usually restricted to adults. In her reading quest, she visits the library where the lower floors are designed for children with video games and nature exhibits. On the upper level is the adult room with tall bookstacks, quiet colors, and quieter footsteps. The tall, female librarian firmly explains to her why children are not allowed to touch the books. Although the librarian is smiling, her attitude and the library's atmosphere convince the heroine that she will have to learn to read some other place. When she does learn to read, problems develop for the heroine and her teacher, but it also allows her to playa major role in the novel. This tale of power and money on the planet Tigris has an interesting theme where only children possess telekinetic ability. The reader is left with a negative impression of the librarian who does provide service of a sort in protecting her collection.

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AUTHOR NOTE

Marcia J. Myers has an A.B. degree from Thiel College in Greenville, Pennsylvania, an M.L.S. from the University of Pittsburgh, and a Ph.D. from Florida State University. Her presentations and publications cover a variety of subjects of interest to her including academic library statistics, accreditation, automation, budgets, e-mail, fundraising, library buildings, library directors, library insurance, library security, online searching, and user surveys. She is probably best known for her work on the effectiveness of reference services which was the subject of her dissertation, major presentations at American Library Association conferences, workshops, and a book entitled *The Accuracy of Telephone Reference/Information Service in Academic Libraries: Two Studies* (with Jassim M. Jirjees, Scarecrow Press, 1983).

This is her first work on science fiction/fantasy and libraries. Dr. Myers is presently the Director of Libraries at Eastern Kentucky University, 521 Lancaster Avenue, Richmond, Kentucky 40475-3121; E-mail: Libmyers@acs.eku.edu.